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REAGAN: Top Advisers Feel Frustration Over Rigidity

"Indeed, some senior aides readily concede that Reagan's position has become more hazardous. 'It's obviously true that there has been a weakening of the Reagan presidency,' one top White House official said, although he suggested that a substantial part of Reagan's effectiveness thus far has come from a carefully created illusion.

"We were never quite as strong as we were able to give the impression of being. We pretended we had a mandate that was very much larger than it was. A tremendous number of people voted against Jimmy Carter, not for Reaganomics. Yet we went about the country impressing them that Reagan was carrying out a mandate,' the official said.

"Now we're saying the mandate has faded, but we never had it to that degree in the first place."